AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR

WEEKLY NEWS SERVICE

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WHOLE NO. 1051. WILLIAM GREEN, President WASHINGTON, D. C., SATURDAY, MAY 30, 1931 FRANK MORRISON, Secretary VOL. 21, NO. 12.

The A. F. of L. Weekly News Service gives a brief summary of important matters affecting labor, occurring in the industrial, legislative and judicial fields, and such other information that will benefit the trade union movement.

Anxiety never yet successfully bridged over any chasm.—Ruffini.

RADIO TRUST PATENT ANNULLED BY COURT

Washington, May 30.—The United States Supreme Court invalidated the Langmuir radio tube patent, held by the General Electric Company. The decision is a smashing blow to the radio trust, as the tube is the life blood of radio.

The court ruled that the tube is simply a "scientific explanation" of old processes and cannot be patented. The decision is a victory for the De Forest Radio Company, which has for several years fought the trust patent.

Every radio manufacturer will be benefited by the decision, as the key to radio monopoly is wrested from the Radio Corporation of America, custodian of the pool of radio patents of General Electric, Westinghouse and other R. C. A. associates.

The decision follows a ruling by the Supreme Court, a month ago, in which the R. C. A. was held to be a violator of the anti-trust laws. Radio station licenses issued to this corporation and its affiliates are endangered by that decision.

The latest decision will release more than a dozen radio manufacturers who were compelled by the radio trust to secure a license to use the Langmuir tube. These manufacturers were forced to pay tribute to the trust rather than risk costly litigation. The decision ends this hold-up.

BARNES HAS REMEDIES FOR INDUSTRIAL DROP

Washington, May 30.—One depression remedy is to permit private insurance companies to write unemployment insurance, said Julius H. Barnes of the United States Chamber of Commerce in an address to the National Association of Mutual Savings Banks.

This plan was recently approved by the New York Legislature, but was vetoed by Governor Roosevelt. He said these companies would be liable to claim that they have a vested right in this new system of insurance.

Another cause for the depression, according to Mr. Barnes, is "Senatorial disparagement of nominees for public office."

The President, under the Constitution, shall appoint Federal officials, "with the advice and consent of the Senate." The Senate, occasionally, exercises its Constitutional prerogative and rejects the nomination.

If our Chief Executives were given the power of a Mussolini, in placing men in office, industrial depressions would be less frequent, according to the reasoning of Mr. Barnes.

DRASTIC PLANS URGED TO RELIEVE WORKLESS

El Paso, Texas, May 30.—Only drastic measures will restore prosperity, declared Charles P. Howard, president International Typographical Union, in an address to the Texas Federation of Labor convention.

The union executive, while making a stirring appeal for the five-day week or six-hour day, painted a drab picture of conditions in eastern industrial centers.

"When there isn't enough work for everybody we must divide work which does exist," he said.

The speaker cited the modern machine, which in some instances can replace more than 500 workers, as among the fundamental causes of unemployment.

"The thing many persons forget when they discuss the part machinery has played in the modern economic structure, is that the machine produces but does not consume," said the trade unionist.

UNIONIST IS GUILTY; GIRL KILLERS FREED

Stroudsburg, Pa., May 30.—Alfred Hoffman, organizer Federation of Full Fashioned Hosiery Workers, was found guilty of conspiracy to commit assault and battery, conspiracy to commit malicious mischief by throwing stones," and conspiracy to "tamper with the automobile of Floyd Andre."

The grand jury and the district attorney did not hold four strikebreakers, who killed Alberta Bachman, a 22-year-old hosiery striker.

In refusing to indict the four acquitted, the district attorney showed more interested in aiding the gun men than in securing conviction. He introduced evidence that the members of the grand jury to believe that when the girl was killed she was in the company of a young man who was carrying a can of yellow paint.

LABOR LAW SIDETRACKED; ISSUE WILL BE STUDIED

Providence, R. I., May 30.—A bill that would reduce the work week for women from 54 hours to 48 hours has been sidetracked by the ancient device of "investigation."

Governor Case appointed an attorney, a jewelry manufacturer and the secretary of the textile employers' association to study the question.

TO WIDEN EMPLOYMENT

Des Moines, Iowa, May 30.—The Iowa State Executive Council adopted a resolution that only one member of a family should be given State employment, due to present unemployment conditions. Heads of State Departments are requested to more widely distribute employment.

ADOPT FIVE-DAY WEEK

Minneapolis, May 30.—The Reliable Parlor Furniture Company signed a new agreement with Upholsterers' Union No. 61. Provision is made for the five-day, 40-hour week and a 10 per cent wage increase.

WORKLESS ISSUE MUST NOT BE EVADED

"Regularization of employment" is discussed by industrial leaders who claim that each industry should bear its own unemployment burden.

This proposal will be helpful, but it should not be confused with a more vital problem —what is to be done for—and with—numberless workers who have been replaced by the machine and scientific processes, and who have lost all claims to their job?

These workers are not laid off—they are discharged.

They would not come under any unemployment relief plan that an industry set up for those who are temporarily released and who expect to resume their work.

"Regularization of employment" would be an ideal situation if there were not 6,500,000 workless; if inventive genius and the scientific mind were not continually enlarging the workless army and narrowing the number of those who are needed in production. The vast unemployed army are not only non-consumers, but they menace work conditions of those who are fortunate to be employed.

These idle workers are a threat to the social order.

There can be no regularization of employment in the true sense when machine victims seek work and employes are haunted by the fear that they, too, will eventually be placed on the street.

There can be no security, mental peace or regularization under the proposed plan. The issue is evaded. Millions of unemployed are ignored, as are forces that created this condition. These forces are ceaseless in their functioning and they will make conditions more acute.

Calmins of industry who talk of "regularization of employment" may hope to create a favored class among employes whom they can "play off" against millions of workless. This is blindness and blundering. It is postponing the day when facts must be faced.

Workless must be placed in employment. This can be done by a drastic reduction of hours.

Employers will voluntarily accept this plan or later be compelled to yield by the forces that are revolutionizing industry and social outlooks.

The millions of unemployed must be given work. This question can not be solved by talk of "regularization of employment" for those who now happen to have jobs.

Employed Ranks Not Enlarged, AFL Shows In Monthly Review

Washington, May 30.—"Employment gains this spring have been so small that conditions are almost as serious as at the first of the year, according to the A. F. of L. Monthly Unemployment Review.

Employment of union members during May gained but five-tenths of one per cent of the membership. Applied to the Nation's wage earners this represents small relief for only about 150,000 of those out of work.

"In one way," the review states, "conditions are more serious than the first of the year, as more families are finding their resources exhausted. Charity organizations are increasing relief payments in March, the latest report, and over 411,000,000 was given out to more than 434,000 families, not including large sums spent to give work.

"Compared with spring improvement in a prosperous year, this year's employment gains have been small. In 1929, from January to May, according to union reports, employment gains covered 4.6 of the membership; this year only 2.7 per cent found work. Since our figures cover a representative group of the Nation's wage earners we may conclude that less than a million of the 6,500,000 without work in January have found jobs in industry. Including agriculture, we estimate only about 1,500,000 in all have found work in January." The review states that "this leaves the Nation with a serious problem ahead for the dull summer months. We must begin planning at once if we are to prevent widespread suffering."

NEXT WAR SHOULD SEE NATION UNDER ORDERS

Washington, May 30.—Conscription of man power and materials in war time without compensation was suggested by Congressman La Guardia to the War Policies Commission.

Hearings are being held on methods to "take the profit out of war." Mr. La Guardia said this is impossible unless every person is placed under military orders and given soldier's rations. There should be no exemptions, he said.

"If you would equalize the burdens of war," declared the lawmaker, "all issuance of currency payments should be stopped, all industry should be taken over without compensation and citizens should be fed as soldiers. Any temporizing with this proposition will defeat its purpose.

"There should be no combatants in the next war," asserted Mr. La Guardia, who was an aviator in the World War. "The safest place will be the first-line trenches. Casualties among the civil population will be enormous. Under any system there will be inequalities; there will be casualties in industry, commerce and finance, the same as combatants. So, there are bound to be inequalities."

Saying he feared "that anything short of a constitutional amendment with very broad powers would fail to accomplish the purpose of his proposal," Mr. La Guardia added:

"To do this you will have to nationalize all industry and every one from Texas Guinan to J. P. Morgan. If you are going to make a system that will take all profits out of war you must be ruthless about it. That is better than to have the enormous profiteering that has been going on."

CONTINUE STATE POLICE

Harrisburg, Pa., May 30.—Representative Musmanno reported that the Senate Judiciary General Committee destroyed his bill that was intended to check Pennsylvania's coal and iron police.

The bill is supported by organized labor and would confine the police to the property of corporations that pay them.

"The amended bill," said Mr. Musmanno, "will continue a mongrel police force."

LABORERS HOLD LINES

Boston, May 30.—Local members of the International Hod Carriers, Building and Common Laborers' Union renewed their contract with organized builders. More than 7,000 workers are affected.

CHAIN STORE TAX WILL BE EXTENDED

New York, May 30.—It is agreed in financial circles that the United States Supreme Court's approval of an Indiana chain store tax will serve as a basis for similar legislation in other States.

The Indiana law was upheld by a 5-to-4 vote. The majority stated that the chains may be taxed within a reasonable limit. This is construed as a warning to legislators that the chains can not be taxed out of existence.

The president of one of the largest chain corporations said: "The opinion indicates that the court stands ready to give relief if taxation of an oppressive character is attempted. This is a real safeguard." This corporation has 40 stores in Indiana and is taxable under the law just upheld to an amount of less than $800.

The general opinion among chain magnates is that the situation will not seriously hamper their expansion. It is pointed out that the chains are developing larger units through the consolidation or elimination of smaller ones. The Indiana license tax for a larger unit is no greater than for a smaller one.

WORKLESS INSURANCE URGED BY UNIONISTS

Atlantic City, May 30.—Unemployment insurance will be urged as a part of the next contract between employers and the International Ladies' Garment Workers', said Benjamin Schlesinger, president of the latter organization.

The union executive declared that if employers attempt to reduce wages they "will have on their hands the biggest fight in the history of the union." Workers can barely enough to live on and if wage reductions are put into effect, the depression will be intensified, he said.

OHIO BUSINESS MEN URGE INCOME TAXES

Columbus, Ohio, May 30.—Ohio retail merchants, testifying before a joint legislative committee, declared they favor a tax on both personal and corporation incomes as "the eventual policy" of the State.

STEEL MAGNATE SCORES WAGE CUTS, "PRETTY CHEAP BUSINESS," HE SAYS

New York, May 30.—Part-time employment and wage reductions in the steel industry is "pretty cheap business," said James A. Farrell, president United States Steel Corporation, in an address at the annual meeting of the American Iron and Steel Institute.

He said steel sold below production costs, and he ridiculed the pretense of alleged "far-sighted business men" who would maintain this system by lowering wages.

The address, unexpected and scathing, followed a statement by Charles M. Schwab, president of the Institute and chairman board of directors of Bethlehem Steel Corporation, that maintenance of wages and spread of employment is one of the outstanding achievements of the steel industry in the present depression.

Turning to Schwab, the steel corporation executive said:

"I am not going to give the industry, Mr. Schwab, the sort of benediction that you have given them and say now, you are all fine men and you are all doing good jobs. I say that we are not doing a good job and that we do a good job we should not indulge in fulsome praise."

Schwab abandoned his professional optimistic pose after Farrell's slashing attack. "I really discover no difference between my views and Mr. Farrell's and I heartily indorse all he said," was the Bethlehem man's comment.

More than 1,000 steel manufacturers listened to the excoration of wage-cutting policies.

"We are living in a fool's paradise if we think that every steel manufacturer in the United States has maintained what is generally known as the current rate of wages; it has not been done," said Mr. Farrell. "There has been honeycombing and pinching and that sort of thing. Even among the most-talked-of companies, the so-called big companies—the companies in the headlines now and then—they do not pay the standard rate of wages when it comes to the rate per hour.

"Nobody talks about stabilizing salaries; it is the man in the mill or the man in the mine.

Mr. Farrell condemned cutthroat competition between steel men and ridiculed economists who talk of low wages and blame the steel tariff.

"The average duty on iron and steel," he said, "would not bring the steel from New York to Lancaster, but the economists and professors and other people always get down to one thing, and that is to cut the 50-cents-an-hour fellow."

P. O. PROMOTIONS URGED BY UNIONIST

Washington, May 30.—The Post Office Department's policy of withholding special clerk promotions is protested by Thos. F. Flaherty, secretary-treasurer National Federation of Post Office Clerks, in a letter to President Hoover.

Post office officials, said Mr. Flaherty, take advantage of a technicality in the law to deny promotions to nearly 1,000 clerks in the $2,100 salary class who, ordinarily, would be promoted into the $2,200 grade and then, a year later, into the $2,300 grade.

"Government officials are constantly urging private employers to avoid wage slashing," said Mr. Flaherty. "The department's policy, in denying earned salary increases to approximately 1,000 clerks, is at variance with the doctrine preached by administration leaders.

"Special clerkships are secured only after years of satisfactory service—at least 15 years in the larger offices. To withhold these promotions now is to deny a wage increase that has been justly earned by more than a decade of efficient work."

WAGE SLASH PROBE HELD IN WISCONSIN

Madison, Wis., May 30.—A majority of the legislative committee that has been probing wage reductions in this State report that reductions have been made in 88 per cent of the 18 cases investigated. The minority, consisting of four members, assert that the evidence is not conclusive, as living costs may equalize the cuts.

The majority members charge that outside influences have been used on Wisconsin employers to still further reduce wages. The minority agrees that wages paid in tobacco warehouses "are unreasonably low, as compared with other industries."

The majority recommends an unemployment insurance law.

LAWMAKER JEERS BUSINESS ACUMEN

Washington, May 30.—Congressman McFadden, chairman House Committee on Banking and Currency, is not impressed by the alleged "acumen" and "far-sightedness" of men in the business world.

In an address to the annual convention of the National Association of Mutual Savings Banks, Mr. McFadden said:

"We hear much about the business world and its splendid handling of the business situation. The kind of business system that is developed in this country, however, together with our capitalistic form of operation, is partly responsible for what has happened. It seems to me as I look back over the happenings of the past few years that much of the mismanagement of some of our industrials, railroads, and business enterprises have been more interested in financial operations incident to juggling for control through the form of consolidation, speculation and the like, than in the study and application of the technical details of the economic operation of their own particular properties."

MAN'S RIGID OPINIONS FIXED AT EARLY AGE

New York, May 30.—"There is but a small minority of human beings who grow intellectually after 23 or 24," said Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler, president Columbia University, in an address to the annual meeting of the American Association for Adult Education.

"Most people, after these ages, settle down to likes and dislikes, habits of living and close their minds," said Dr. Butler. "Education is too often confounded with school instruction. While the school has a large part to play it is only one highly organized instrumentality of education."

Dr. Butler said a closed mind can not cope with present day political, industrial and social changes.

"These problems are solved only by those whose minds are made up for once and all, who have elasticity of temper and whose feelings are not hardened."

DODGING AGREEMENT MADE BY BUSINESS?

New York, May 30.—Are business men preparing a popular psychology that will permit them to repudiate their non-binding agreement with the President?

The Washington correspondent of the Wall Street Journal makes this significant statement: "* * * only a few employers were represented at the Washington conference so that their competitors who were not represented would appear free from any promise."

THOMAS REDDING DEAD; WAS POPULAR UNIONIST

Chicago, May 30.—Thomas Redding, first general vice president Sheet Metal Workers' International association, died at his home in this city.

The funeral was largely attended by labor officials and other acquaintances of this popular trade unionist.

He was a representative of his international at 17 conventions of the American Federation of Labor. He was an outstanding figure among organized building craftsmen.

TAX CHAIN STORES

Tallahassee, Fla., May 30.—The State Senate passed a bill defining chain stores and imposing a special license tax thereon.

Pope Stresses Industrial Unity; Few Control Economic Power

Vatican City, May 30.—Self government in industry, with the State encouraging understandings between employers and workers, is urged by Pope Pius XI in his 20,000-word encyclical on the "Social and Labor Question."

Unemployment is referred to as a "dreadful scourge." Distribution of wealth, the Pope said, must be based on these principles of social justice which forbid one class from excluding another class from a share in the profits.

The letter fills two and one-half pages of a newspaper. A resume of the encyclical featured a world radio message by the Pope a week ago.

Free competition has resulted in dominating the Pontiff asserted. "Immense power and despotic economic domination are concentrated in the hands of the few, and these few are frequently not owners but only trustees and directors of invested funds they administer them at their good pleasure.

"This free competition," he said, "has given way before the force battle between those who fight most relentlessly, who pay least heed to the dictates of conscience.

"Concentration of power has led to the greatest temptation for domination. "First, there is the struggle for dictatorship in the economic sphere itself; then the fierce battle to acquire control of the state so that its resources and authority may be abused in economic struggles; finally, there is the clash between the states themselves.

"These facts lead to international clashes and the consequences of all this is free competition is dead; economic dictatorship has taken its place."

The present economic lives of workers is described as "hard, cruel and relentless in its unsightliness."

A living wage is urged, as is a better distribution of wealth. "Mothers of families should not be forced to work outside the home," the Pope.

"Every effort must be made that the fathers of families receive a wage sufficient to meet adequately the ordinary domestic needs. If in the present state of society that is not always feasible, social justice demands that reforms be introduced without delay which will guarantee every adult workman a just wage."

ECONOMIC SOLUTION OF POPE EXPLAINED

Washington, May 30.—Cooperation between employer and employed, with the State limited to encouragement of such a movement, and the checking of oppressive measures, is recommended by Pius XI in his encyclical, said Rev. Dr. John A. Ryan of Catholic University, in a review of the letter. A "high point" of the review follows:

"Neither free competition nor overwhelming control by corporations is the remedy. What the Pope desires is self-government in industry under the protection of the State, but also restrained by the State from oppressing either the worker or the consumer. Employers and employes of the same group should 'join forces to produce goods and give service.' Moreover, the various nations should unite in the endeavor 'to promote a healthy economic co-operation by prudent pacts and institutions.'"

STABILIZING SCHEME MADE MATTERS WORSE

El Paso, Texas, May 30.—The cry, "stabilization of industry," that swept the nation has resulted in more profits for the few and more idleness for workers, said J. W. Parks, president Texas Federation of Labor, in his report to the annual convention.

President Parks reminded the delegates that last year he predicted what is now happening.

"I called attention to the campaign of stabilization that was in progress in every line of industry, extending even through the government to the demand for increased output in demand, and advised instead of that policy bringing about the desired relief, it was that policy endangering the entire economic structure of this country," said President Parks.

"Now, after a year of stabilization and partially everything except man power has gone through that stabilizing process, we find that there are hundreds of thousands more in the ranks of the unemployed, hungry and in need of clothing. The country is in far worse condition than ever before in its history and the entire economic structure is in a crumbling condition.

"Yet, in the face of this condition, this tremendously reduced buying power, we find many of the large industries reporting a higher percentage of profit for 1930 than they made in 1929. The profit could not have been made other than through the further reduction of man power, increasing hours of labor and reducing wages."

SIMPLIFIED PRACTICE SAVED $250,000,000

Washington, May 30.—Government aid to business men in standardizing and simplifying their output has enabled 120 industries to save $250,000,000, according to Dr. Julius Klein, Assistant Secretary of Commerce.

"Ten years ago," said Dr. Klein, "there were 552 patterns and dimensions of woven wire fencing on the market; simplification cut the total to 62. Once there were 49 varieties of milk bottles; now there are but four."

Simplification runs through the list of industry, and has resulted in less capital being tied up in inventories.

CONTRACT RENEWED IN IRON INDUSTRY

Atlantic City, May 30.—The existing contract between the Western Sheet and Tinplate Manufacturers' Association and the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers was renewed at a conference of officials of the two organizations.

PUBLIC TRUST CONTROL FOR RAILROADS URGED

New York, May 30.—"The government should assume responsibility for such business as is now under an elaborate system of public regulation," said Joseph B. Eastman, member Interstate Commerce Commission, in an address to the New York Traffic Club. A score of railroad executives were present.

The speaker did not advocate government ownership or control.

"The general idea," he said, "is that the business should not be managed by a government bureau; that it should be carried on by a corporation or public trust controlled by the government and designed to be self-supporting, and that the directors and trustees should be elected in part by non-political agencies.

"It is my thought that if the same amount of ingenuity were devoted to the subject as has been devoted, for example, to the creation of intricate and largely vicious masses of holding companies and interlaced subsidiaries, it would be quite possible to evolve a plan for assuming governmental responsibility for the transportation service which would retain most of the merits of private service, to the extent to which some such thought as this is rapidly developing all over the world with respect to public utilities is a matter of exceeding interest."

Mr. Eastman's theory appears somewhat similar to the proposal of the British Labor party, in control of Great Britain, that "public companies" be created to handle public service corporations.

STATE "RED FLAG" LAW VOIDED BY HIGH COURT

Washington, May 30.—The California "red flag" law, as construed by the courts of that State, is repugnant to the guaranty of liberty of speech contained in the Constitution, ruled Chief Justice Hughes of the United States Supreme Court.

The opinion states that "the maintenance of the opportunity for free political discussion to the end that government may be responsive to the will of the people and that changes may be obtained by lawful means, an opportunity to the security of the Republic, is a fundamental principle of our constitutional system."

The District Court of Appeals of California held that the "red flag" law included "peaceful and orderly opposition to government by legal means and within constitutional limitations."

Chief Justice Hughes handed down an emphatic dissent against such an opinion.

FARRELL WAGE TALK IS NEW LINE; DO STEEL MAGNATES FEAR REVOLT?

New York, May 30.—The charge that steel employers are cutting wages, made by James A. Farrell, president United States Steel Corporation, may force a change among business men who talk one way and act another.

The steel corporation executive is aware that steel workers are not receiving a living wage. He is also undoubtedly aware that a recent strike of unorganized steel workers at the Empire Steel Company, Mansfield, Ohio, resulted in withdrawal of a wage cut when these workers began joining the union.

The danger of a sweep toward unionism, if wage cuts are enforced, may compel these business men to abandon their rose-water pronouncements and Pollyanna tactics.

This change is indicated by the financial editor of the New York Herald Tribune, who states that "wages for steel workers are not high," and who charges steel manufacturers with incompetency. This is an unusual declaration by a metropolitan newspaper.

"Even in the prosperous years of 1928 and 1929," says this writer, "the average wage of the rank and file of steel workers, largely non-union, was probably below $33 a week. Under present conditions many steel workers, in some cases, reduced wage scales, it is doubtful if the average income of employed steel workers represents even a bare living return. Statistics from any responsible source are not available in this connection."

The financial writer says that the steel manufacturers, during prosperous years, failed to make any provision for an industrial sag.

"The large profits of recent years were, in some cases, used in unwise expansions, or even distributed to parties interested. The fact that some companies, which earned dividends several times over during the profitable years were obliged to effect dividend cuts early in the depression period, is a reflection, perhaps, on the wisdom of management."

CORRUPTION IN WEST VIRGINIA SHOWN IN STATE POLICE PROBE

Wheeling, W. Va., May 30.—An investigation of charges against the Superintendent of State Police has again exposed political corruption and industrial autocracy in Logan County, this State.

One witness testified that when he was a deputy sheriff of that county he was paid a bonus of $2100 a month by the Logan County Coal Operators' Association.

The Wheeling Intelligencer, one of the State's leading newspapers, says:

"The Logan County Coal Operators' Association has no more legal status than the Logan County Bootleggers' Association, if there is one. It has no right, morally or legally, to keep armed men under pay, and to corrupt officials for its private purposes, no more than any other body of lawbreakers that might assemble for their own ends.

"It is not strange that West Virginia has, or to certain counties at least, before all the world, a name for perversion of justice, the corruption of official life and the criminal repression of men struggling for their ordinary rights as citizens, when the buying and selling of official action and of official favor become the common thing, so common as not even to hide its head in shame, when dragged out to the public gaze."

The history of thug-ridden Logan County is a continuous record of debauchery, scandal, murder and gun men maintained by coal operators. These employers use the machinery of government to check trade unionism.

INDUSTRIAL SLUMP BLAMED ON BUSINESS

Long Beach, Calif., May 30.—Lack of industrial democracy, and the resultant overproduction, is the cause of our industrial slump, said Rev. Fr. Robert E. Lucey of this city in an address to local trade unionists.

"When the machine age came men were declared people and industry did not make a place for these workers," said Fr. Lucey.

"While dividends increased in 1930, wages decreased in the same proportion.

"Industry has eaten the goose that has laid the golden egg and is now suffering. The solution is a reduction of hours for workers with an increase of pay, so that the workers will have a portion of these billions of profit that were made while wages were being reduced."